

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
REMARKS TO THE PRESS, WITH GERMAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE VOLKER RUEHE  
MUNICH, GERMANY  
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Ambassador Holbrooke: It's my great pleasure to introduce not only our Secretary of Defense on his second full day as Secretary, but also the Minister of Defense of the Federal Republic of Germany. So, without any further ado, let me give the podium to the two of them.

Secretary Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. Let me make an opening comment. As Ambassador Holbrooke has said, this is my second day as the Secretary of Defense of the United States and one usually doesn't spend the second day as Secretary on a foreign visit. But I had this trip planned for several months. It's a very important trip for me and, even though it's my second day, even though I have very important budget presentations to make to the Congress on Monday, President Clinton agreed with me that this was an important enough trip that I should come anyway.

It's important to me for several reasons: First of all, it gave me a chance to reaffirm the solidarity and friendship with our colleagues in Germany and in particular with Minister Ruehe. And secondly, it gave me a chance to meet with NATO officials at a point in history which I consider a crossroads. As you all know, NATO was originally formed as a defensive alliance against the military threat from the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Now, with that threat gone, and for several years now, some have said that NATO was drifting. Some have said that NATO has lost its relevance. And with that loss of relevance, many have observed that the United States is losing interest in NATO and maybe even losing interest in Europe, it was stated.

Well, I am here today to tell you that that is not true. That was said most eloquently, I believe, by President Clinton at his summit meeting in Brussels just last month. Where, with the introduction of the Partnership for Peace, we have a new architecture around which NATO can not only sustain itself into the future but grow into the future and increase in relevance.

Today, with that architecture agreed by NATO and with many of the central and eastern European nations beginning to sign up as members of the Partnership for Peace, it is now urgent that we get on with the task of creating that. We have created the architecture already; now we have -- brick by brick -- to build the building of this new partnership. And I'm here today, I'm here this weekend, to begin that process and to begin our very important bilateral relationships with Germany and with Minister Ruehe.

Ruehe: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. I said I take it as a symbol that you spend your second day in Germany and your first working hours here as a sign of your close engagements with Germany, Europe (and) NATO. Our troops are cooperating very closely in Somalia, that was one thing we talked about, and of course, we are very grateful for the leadership of the United States in the summit in Brussels. I have said that Germany is going to play a very active role in putting flesh on the bones of the Partnership for Peace program. I am also looking forward to a very close cooperation. Thank you very much.

Q: Mr Secretary, one brief question if I may. Mr. Secretary, we had some shelling today in Sarajevo and we have initial reports that at least thirty-two people might have been killed. You speak of the relevance of NATO; how can NATO remain relevant if the killing goes on in Sarajevo and nothing is done to stop it?

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Perry: Let me step aside from the shelling of Sarajevo in this last day. I have not read any detailed accounts of that so I can make an informed comment about it. But the role of NATO in Bosnia -- in bringing peace to Bosnia -- hinges primarily on the ability of the three combatant partners there to come to a peace agreement. Those discussions are going on in Geneva today. If they are able to come to a peace agreement, NATO will have very great relevance because we have agreed, at that time, to supply substantial numbers of peacekeeping forces to help maintain that peace. The United States is not ready, NATO is not prepared to send armies into the former Yugoslavia to enforce a peace agreement against the will of the people.

Mr. Ruehe, do you want to comment further on that?

Ruehe: Can it be in German? Can I steal a few words?  
(informal translation) I just wanted to say that I totally agree. I believe that we all agree that it is not acceptable that the developments there go on, and that in close consultation with the United Nations, which has the final decision on the steps to be taken, one must react to the situation. But it is essential for a peace agreement that all sides be ready for peace.

Q: When you say it is not acceptable, what do you have as means to influence it?

Ruehe: It has been said that you cannot force it (peace) from outside, but NATO has made preparations -- however, the decision must come from the United Nations.

Q: You spoke of not sending armies and so did Minister Rifkin, how about air strikes against the artillery that is killing these people?

Perry: That will certainly be considered. I cannot give you an answer on that. That will certainly be considered. I want to also point out... Just to put... understand that some positive benefit has come out of the UNPROFOR effort that has already taken place there and the humanitarian airlifts that have taken place there -- the airlifts that are in conjunction with Germany and the United States and other countries. We believe that tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives have already been saved by the humanitarian effort and by the actions of the UNPROFOR forces there.

Q: What do you mean when you say that airstrikes will be considered. Will you please amplify on that? Is there something new in this process?

Perry: The United States President, President Clinton, has already stated that we would not permit the strangulation of Sarajevo. And if this action which is being described today is seen as a strangulation, and if we cannot prevent that from continuing forward, we will definitely consider stronger actions, including airstrikes.

Thank you.